



## Global Campaign News – Issue #82 19 June 2007

Welcome to the *Global Campaign News*! The *Global Campaign News* is a forum for international exchange on microbicide activities and information with an aim to build a more informed and integrated movement for microbicide development and other prevention options against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. This and previous issues of *GC News* are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcarchives.htm>

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## *Advocacy in action*

### A conversation about advocacy and the pharmaceutical industry

#### Global

Microbicides advocates made a strategic decision several years ago not to target large pharmaceutical companies in microbicides advocacy efforts as a means to accelerate research and development. This decision may seem counter-intuitive, particularly in the HIV/AIDS movement, given the central role treatment activism has played, and how often pharmaceutical companies continue to be the target of advocacy around access to treatment.

In North America, some advocates have recently raised the question of whether we should reconsider this strategic decision, given the rapidly changing microbicides research and development (R&D) landscape. On 25 May, the Global Campaign (GCM) hosted a call with North American advocates to get a better understanding of why the decision was made historically; consider whether the current circumstances now warrant rethinking that decision; and discuss what motivates (or not) pharmaceutical companies to invest R&D resources in new product development, and how that plays into our strategic decision about advocacy.

#### *Background*

A number of years ago, the Rockefeller Foundation commissioned a pharmaco-economics analysis on microbicides development. Its conclusion was that pharmaceutical companies were actually reading the market correctly: the barriers to entry by the pharmaceutical industry are too big for the first generation products. These include an uncertain market, liability concerns; an uncertain regulatory pathway, and no proof of concept. In other words, there is a mismatch of expertise between what pharmaceutical companies can provide and what the field needs. More realistically, they predicted that pharmaceutical companies would watch the field until we have proof of concept (i.e. evidence that microbicides as a concept actually works), and would then either buy out the small biotechs that produce the first effective products, or become otherwise engaged once the market would get big enough to warrant it.

#### *Current context*

In the current context, does the current shift towards ARV-based microbicides change the equation, given that there is now more overlap with the R&D portfolio of pharmaceutical companies?

It is clear that the microbicides field needs new leads, and one source is products from the private sector. Since microbicides are to be applied topically, products with low rates of systemic absorption may be promising as

microbicide candidates. Coincidentally, this is one of the factors that can lead to a product being discarded as potential candidate for HIV treatment (where good systemic absorption is essential). Thus, it is likely that some of the major pharmaceutical companies involved in HIV treatment research may have products that they have discarded from consideration that could – in fact – be viable microbicide candidates. Can advocates do something to facilitate or encourage these companies to search their stock of shelved products for such leads? And is the Rockefeller analysis of “big Pharma’s” potential involvement in the field still pertinent?

One distinction we have to make with early traditional treatment activism is that we don’t have a product. There is proven microbicide for us to demand access to – unlike the situation with treatment advocacy in which there are proven drugs that are not universally accessible. Also, in contrast to microbicides, with pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) there is actually a precedent of using ARVs for prophylaxis in the case of the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

#### *A new approach?*

To advance the field, we may need to consider a new approach to advocacy with pharmaceutical companies – an approach that would include engaging advocates, industry, donor-sponsors and regulatory agencies.

We may also need to consider a shift in advocacy strategies. HIV treatment activism has ranged from very antagonistic activism (calls for boycotts, destruction of exhibit booths, die-ins) to negotiations at the table. In the microbicides field, does it make sense to move toward more activism – but to reconsider the style of activism that is most likely to be effective?

It would also be worthwhile to look more closely at the scope of the royalty-free licensing agreements that have been negotiated with major pharmaceutical companies. For example, what specific conditions exist for developing countries, and how are developing countries defined? What conditions exist, if any, around access in markets outside developing countries?

This is the beginning of a longer conversation, and it will be important for microbicides advocates to keep monitoring the field and to consider multiple strategic avenues for advancing research.

The four speakers on the call were:

- Lori Heise, Director and co-founder of the Global Campaign for Microbicides;
- Yasmin Halima, a Senior Consultant to the International AIDS Society (IAS) where she coordinates the ILF (Industry Liaison Forum). Yasmin has also been involved with PrEP stakeholder consultations working with investigators, industry, community advocates and government representatives;
- Lorne Fox, Market Development and Community Relations Manager at Shire BioChem; and
- Enrico Mandarino, Manager of Stakeholder Relations at Tibotec.

The call has been recorded and is available to listen. For instructions, please contact Marc-André LeBlanc at [mleblanc@global-campaign.org](mailto:mleblanc@global-campaign.org).

## **GCM European strategy meeting makes headlines in Denmark Europe**

Following a small posting on an AIDS network website, GCM’s recent meetings in Copenhagen caused quite a stir within the local media. It was rumored that a group of experts would be meeting in the capital to announce that a cure for AIDS had been found! Long-time supporter of microbicides and host of the meeting, Henrik Arildsen of HIV Denmark, quickly squashed the rumour and spoke passionately of the need for microbicides and latest developments in the research effort during live interviews on national TV and radio.

The real (and no less exciting!) reason for the meetings in Copenhagen was to bring GCM partners and allies in Europe together to strategise on joint action on microbicides in the region, and to mobilise local support and advocacy efforts in Scandinavia. Twenty NGO representatives from nine European countries gathered with GCM staff over a two-day meeting that was jointly organised with local partner HIV Denmark. Discussion focused on setting the goals for European advocacy at member state and EU level, and identifying areas where capacity for

specific aspects needed to be built. The meeting concluded with a strong sense of unity on where the Campaign should focus over the coming years and clarity on next steps at the national and regional level.

Speaking at a seminar on microbicides held at the offices of the Danish Family Planning Association (Sex og Samfund) on 30<sup>th</sup> May, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Denmark's strong interest in the development of microbicides and their ongoing relationship with IPM. About twenty participants drawn from the Danish NGO network on AIDS and development listened to presentations by Rebekah Webb of the GCM European Secretariat and Celine Mias, Programmes Manager at IPM. Questions raised from the floor included whether IPM was investigating microbicides for rectal use, whether microbicides would protect people from other STIs, and how microbicides would be introduced when they become available.



Picture: Participants of the GCM European Strategy Meeting in sunny Copenhagen... From left to right and back - Gabriel Boichat (gTt), Carmen Tarrades (ICW), Sini Pasanen (Positiiviset), Henrik Arildsen (HIV Denmark), Aurelie Verny (AIDES), Ciaran McKinney (GLEN), Marc-Andre LebLanc (GCM), Irene Keizer (Aids Fonds), Michal Odermarsky (EATG), Moniek van der Kroef (Stop AIDS Now!), Brigitte Bruun (AIDS Fondet), Lydia Zigomo (Water Aid), Annabel Mowat (HIV Scotland), Georgina Caswell (AHPN), Alain Volny-Anne (GCM Translator), Rosie Toner (IFPA), Arwa Meijer (GCM), Rebekah Webb (GCM), Kim Mulji (NAZ Foundation) and Lut Joris (Sensoa/IPPF)

## **SisterSong conference focuses on reproductive justice for women of color North America**

From 31 May to 3 June, the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective presented its second U.S. national conference. The conference, entitled "Let's Talk about Sex" was hosted in Chicago by African American Women Evolving (a GCM partner organization). Almost 1,000 women of color and allies attend the four day conference that included workshops and plenaries on topics such as birth control, senior sexuality, STDs, microbicides, gynecological health and wellness, and more -- all through a reproductive justice lens. There was also a special track of workshops designed by and for young women and teens. Microbicides were mentioned in a number of conversations, but were highlighted in a workshop that was presented by SisterLove, the Global Campaign, and Gay Men's Health Crisis as well as in a plenary presentation by GCM staffer, Bindiya Patel.

As explained in a background paper available on SisterSong's website (see below) reproductive justice is "the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, environmental and economic well-being of women and girls, based on the full achievement and protection of women's human rights. It offers a new perspective on reproductive issue advocacy, pointing out that as Indigenous women and women of color it is important to fight equally for (1) the right to have a child; (2) the right not to have a child; and (3) the right to parent the children we have, as well as to control our birthing options, such as midwifery. We also fight for the necessary enabling conditions to realize these rights. This is in contrast to the singular focus on abortion by the pro-choice movement."

The SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective is made up of 76 local, regional and national grassroots organizations and more than 400 individuals, as well as white and/or male allies who support our goal of improving the lives of indigenous women and women of color in the United States through Reproductive Justice. SisterSong represents five primary ethnic populations/indigenous nations in the United States: native American/Indigenous, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/Arab American, Latina, and Black/African American. For more information on this conference and the reproductive justice movement, visit:

[http://www.sistersong.net/2007\\_NationalConference/2007NC\\_index.html](http://www.sistersong.net/2007_NationalConference/2007NC_index.html)  
[http://www.sistersong.net/reproductive\\_justice.html](http://www.sistersong.net/reproductive_justice.html)

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## **Highlighted Resources**

### **Microbicides BINGO anyone?**

Are you looking for a new way to spice up a meeting of advocates? Microbicides BINGO might be just the answer. Intended to entertain and educate, the game is available at <http://www.global-campaign.org/usdownload.htm#public>. This BINGO game was developed by the advocates at the New York Microbicides Working Group. Please let us know if you have additional resources that you would like to share!

### **Brochure for African American outreach**

The Global Campaign is pleased to share a new outreach tool focused on the African American community in the U.S. Adapted from an original design by Connecticut Microbicides Now!, the brochure provides the basics of microbicides and engage them in advocacy efforts. We invite you to distribute the brochure widely! See the brochure at our new African American outreach page: <http://www.global-campaign.org/afr-am-women.htm> Any additional ideas for outreach materials are most welcome, and can be sent to [bpatel@global-campaign.org](mailto:bpatel@global-campaign.org)

### **PrEP Watch: Updated website on pre-exposure prophylaxis**

Pre-exposure prophylaxis is an experimental strategy that looks at whether the daily oral use of antiretrovirals by HIV-negative people can help reduce their risk of becoming infected through sexual intercourse (vaginal and anal) and injection drug use.

The AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition and the UCLA Program in Global Health have recently launched an updated and expanded website dedicated to providing updates on research on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP Watch can be found at [www.prepwatch.org](http://www.prepwatch.org).

As part of the site, they are developing a set of frequently asked questions. Please send your questions to [faq@prepwatch.org](mailto:faq@prepwatch.org), and they will try to answer the questions they receive.

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We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! Please send emails to: [info@global-campaign.org](mailto:info@global-campaign.org). If you would like to unsubscribe to the *Global Campaign News*, please reply to this e-mail with the subject line: UNSUBSCRIBE